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OUT OF THE ARCHIVES

The "article" below is the third installment of "Out of the Archives'" longest strategy and tactics reprint series to date, a seven-part series comprising Larry Peery's book, Diplomacy--Introduction to the Strategy and Tactics of Diplomacy. The book is broken down into seven chapters, one for each of the seven major powers in Diplomacy. This issue features Chapter 3 on France.

DIPLOMACY--INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGY & TACTICS OF DIPLOMACY

by Larry Peery

Chapter 3: France

France is one of the most popular countries with Diplomacy players and is also considered one of the most favored to win.

A. Acquisition of Unoccupied Supply Centers. France has the greatest share of any nation in the twelve unoccupied supply centers, which works both to her advantage and her disadvantage. If she comes to terms with her neighbors, there is no reason why she should not occupy Spain, Portugal and Belgium on the first year's moves. Sometimes, particularly if she faces an English or German attack, France will only gain two of these three supply centers; but under ideal conditions (and as a personal note I might additionally note that in the six games in which I have played France I have obtained three builds on the first year no less than five times. I should also note in the sixth game I obtained no builds--which shows the power of a three-way attack on France), France can move F Brest-Mid Atlantic, A Paris-Burgundy, A Marseilles-Spain in the Spring 1901 and then F Mid Atlantic-Portugal, A Burgundy-Belgium, A Spain-hold in the Fall. Under less than ideal circumstances, France may be forced to move Marseilles to Piedmont in the Spring (hoping it will bounce an Italian A Venice-Piedmont) and then move Marseilles-Spain in the Fall. Or, France may be forced to use Marseilles to support Paris-Burgundy in the Spring and then move Marseilles to Spain in the Fall. The fleet in Brest has two options. To move to the English Channel to stop the English fleet in London is one. The other is moving it to the Mid Atlantic and then to Portugal, Brest, the Channel or the Irish Sea as circumstances dictate in the Fall.

The important question is whether France is better off to occupy these three supply centers the first year and thereby expose herself to attacks from her neighbors because of her rapid increase in size or, as is sometimes better, to wait a year before occupying one of these centers or even to let one of her allies occupy it temporarily.

B. Alliances. France, because of her strategic position, has a large variety of alliances and non-aggression pacts that she can choose from. Each of them offers her certain advantages but many of them also contain hidden liabilities.

1. With England and Russia Against Germany. Like every other country, Germany cannot withstand a three-nation attack from France, England and Russia. Normally, as French armies drive from Belgium and Burgundy into the Ruhr and Munich, English fleets are attacking Denmark and Kiel. From the east, Russia sends her armies into Prussia and Silesia to attack Berlin. Such a three-way attack usually gives France Munich and assured

possession of Belgium. This is less than England or Russia gain, both tactically and in units, since England gains a strong foothold on the continent in Holland and Kiel, and perhaps, Denmark, and Russia gains Berlin and usually Denmark.

2. With England Against Germany. Often, if Russia is faced with attacks from Turkey and Austria, France and England find themselves fighting Germany alone. This is not dangerous as long as Italy remains neutral toward France, or France has a strong defensive position in the south. The usual strategy is for French armies to hold German forces in Munich and the Ruhr while English fleets are seizing Denmark and attacking Kiel, Holland, or Berlin through the Baltic. In almost every case, the over-whelming tactical position of the French armies and English fleets is enough to defeat Germany.

3. With Russia Against Germany. Sometimes, France finds herself in possession of a non-aggression pact with England at the same time she is allied with Russia against Germany. This can be a most useful situation, especially if England is attacking Russia and not fighting Germany. French and Russian armies can defeat Germany, provided that England is not too successful in her attacks on Russia. All too often Germany supports England into Sweden (or vice versa) and eliminates a Russian supply center and the subsequent Russian unit removal destroys her offensive.

If France can remain aloof from a Russian-English squabble over the remains of Germany, she can usually find an advantageous position in the end game. France often can be a decisive force in balancing the power of England and Russia after Germany has collapsed.

4. With Germany Against England. Sometimes, France is able through a usual series of circumstances (eg. Italian neutrality vis-a-vis France, Germany not fighting an eastern front war) to develop an alliance with Germany against England. Such an alliance can win but it is France that takes the burden of the fight and receives the smallest share of the spoils (London and Liverpool at best). The wise manipulation of the French fleet in Brest, the German fleet in Kiel, and the adapt use of convoys can bring England down, though rarely quickly. France is wise to consider carefully such an alliance since it builds a German front across her northern and eastern borders and leaves her only with the prospect of fighting a massive German front, or attacking Italy (and rarely will Italy remain passive while the threat of a French attack is looming). In light of England's superior defensive position and the difficulty of making any gain against her, France is rarely wise to attack her.

5. With Austria Against Italy. In addition to the main front to her north, France must also consider the southern front facing Italy. Since Italy rarely challenges France for control of Iberia unless she is planning a general campaign against France, and France can hardly prevent Italy from taking Tunis, there is little for France to gain except from Italy itself. Perhaps more important than the supply centers France can gain from Italy is the improved tactical position she can acquire by controlling the Mediterranean, particularly, the Ionian Sea.

France and Austria can easily crush Italy (see under AUSTRIA for further discussion). However, as I mentioned, France's main advantage from such an attack comes not from the two supply centers she gains, Rome and Tunis, but from her improved board position. If France can establish herself in the line Tuscany, Rome, Tyrrhenian, Tunis, she has either an excellent defensive position from which she can hold off anyone advancing from the eastern Mediterranean or an excellent base for a drive into the Balkans.

Depending on the course of the mid game, France may, after crushing Italy, decide to move eastward through the Mediterranean or swing north against England or Germany.

C. Non-aggression Pacts. Since France obviously cannot fight England, Germany and Italy at the same time, she must secure a non-aggression pact with at least one, and preferably two of her neighbors.

1. With Italy. If possible, France should acquire a non-aggression pact with Italy and encourage her to move eastward against Austria. This gives France at least two sure builds and ensures her of sufficient strength to be able to meet a German or English attack if one develops. If such an attack does not come, France may either ally with England against Germany or with Germany against England. Or France may remain neutral on her northern front and turn against Italy with Austrian help. The terms of

a non-aggression pact usually include the neutrality of the Piedmont, the Gulf of Lyon, the Western Mediterranean and North Africa.

2. With England. In most games, France and England agree to a non-aggression pact, if not an out-right alliance against Germany, since both countries have more to gain elsewhere than by fighting each other. A neutrality pact should include the Channel, the North Atlantic and the Irish Sea.

3. With Germany. Unless she can be certain of English or Russian support, France cannot attack Germany alone and must, in such a case, seek a non-aggression pact with Germany. She cannot fight Germany alone (at least at the beginning of the game). Since a non-aggression pact with Germany (and not an alliance) precludes an attack on England (since France cannot successfully attack England alone), France must either fight Italy or remain neutral. A non-aggression pact with Germany should include the neutrality of the Ruhr and Burgundy after the first year (in the first year France must move Paris to Burgundy, both to protect itself from Germany or to use it as an advancing point to Belgium).

D. Defensive Game. Because of her continental position, France must often fight a defensive game, though she has what is probably the best defensive position of any of the continental countries. There is no reason why France cannot successfully fight a defensive war until her opponents are either tired of fighting her or are themselves attacked from the rear and forced to cease their own attacks.

1. Against England, Germany, and Italy. As with any country facing three attackers, France cannot hope to survive such an attack (especially if it comes in 1901) though she may survive longer than any other country in similar circumstances, especially if she has had a chance to pick up her three builds for Belgium, Spain and Portugal. If France is attacked from three sides, there is a chance that she may survive for a considerable period if her opponents do not fully coordinate their moves. There is, always, the possibility that a Second Tier country (in this case, Austria and Russia) will intervene and draw off enough of the attackers to give France some help indirectly.

2. Against England and Germany. If she is allowed to concentrate her forces against England and Germany, France can, if played well, hold off both of them almost indefinitely. In such a conflict, the Mid Atlantic and Burgundy are key provinces.

3. Against England and Italy. This combination can really be more dangerous to France than an English-German attack. If Italy is not fighting Austria and has built a fleet in her first year (for Tunis) and England has her fleets in the south, they can jointly move against Iberia; while France hopelessly tries to cover both fronts. France's best means of protecting herself against this comes from her first builds. France must remember that those three builds the first year (assuming she does occupy Belgium, Spain, and Portugal) will be her only ones until she takes a supply center from another country and should accordingly plan her builds to aid her in attacking that country. Normally, France builds at least one fleet, and sometimes two, or if she is planning to fight a continental war against Germany, she may build three armies.

E. Offensive Game. The neutral position of Switzerland and its separation of France's eastern front into two parts has important ramifications for France. To the north, France has only two real choices--support England against Germany, or support Germany against England. Occasionally she involves herself in an alliance with Russia against either England or Germany but this is often a risky business. To the south, France must decide whether to fight Italy or not. Because of the location of Switzerland, there is no possibility of playing off the nations of the First Tier against each other as in England's situation. France is thus somewhat limited. It can fight a defensive war in the south and an offensive war in the north or vice versa, which is something few other countries can do, but normally France, unless backed by powerful and loyal allies, is better to involve herself in one campaign at a time.

F. Waiting Game. In some cases, France, after acquiring her three unoccupied supply centers, prefers to wait and see whether England or Germany (or Russia) will become master of northern and central Europe before committing herself to a course of action as ally or opponent of the dominant power.

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